

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 and 22-35 are pending in the present application. Claims 1 and 22 were canceled; claims 2-6, 12-15, 23, 24, 27 and 35 were amended; and claims 36, 37 and 38 were added. Reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested.

While Applicants believe that claims 1 and 22 are patentable over the cited references, in order to expedite prosecution, applicants have cancelled claims 1 and 22. Claims which depended on claims 1 and 22 have been either amended to be independent claims or have been modified to depend from an allowable independent claim. Applicants therefore submit that all claims are in condition for allowance.

New claims 36 -38 have been added to more fully protect Applicants' invention. Claims 36-38 depend from allowable claims, and, accordingly, raise no new issues that will require further searching or consideration by the Examiner. Entrance of claims 36 - 38 is, accordingly, believed to be appropriate.

I. 35 U.S.C. § 102, Anticipation

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-2, 4, 12-15 and 22-26 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Luffel et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,222,699 B1). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claims 1 and 22 have been cancelled. Dependent claims 2-4 and 12-15 have been amended to depend from allowed independent claim 9. Dependent claims 23 and 24 have been amended to depend from amended independent claim 27. Amended independent claim 27 has been amended to overcome the Examiner's objection, thereby placing claim 27 in condition for allowance. Therefore, claims 2-4, 12-15, 23 and 24 are allowable at least by virtue of their depending from an allowable claim.

Therefore, the rejection of claims 1-2, 4, 12-15 and 22-26 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 has been overcome.

II. 35 U.S.C. § 102, Anticipation

The Examiner has rejected claims 1 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Ostwald et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,262,863 B1). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 has been cancelled. Dependent claim 3 has been amended to depend from allowed independent claim 9. Therefore, claim 3 is allowable at least by virtue of its depending from an allowable claim.

Therefore, the rejection of claims 1 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 has been overcome.

III. Objection to Claims

The Examiner has stated that claims 5-8, 11 and 27-35 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In response, the claims have been rewritten to overcome this objection.

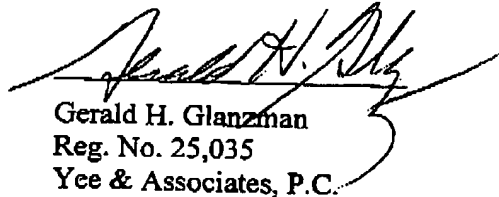
IV. Conclusion

It is respectfully urged that the subject application is patentable over the cited references and is now in condition for allowance. It is, accordingly, respectfully requested that the Examiner so find and issue a Notice of Allowance in due course.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number if in the opinion of the Examiner such a telephone conference would expedite or aid the prosecution and examination of this application.

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Respectfully submitted,



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